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- NEWS RELEASE -

BYSIEWICZ PRAISES PASSAGE OF CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT PERMITTING 17 YEAR-OLDS TO VOTE IN PRIMARIES IF THEY TURN 18 BY THE GENERAL ELECTION

SECRETARY OF THE STATE SEES MAJOR EXPANSION OF VOTING RIGHTS IN A YEAR
WHEN YOUNG PEOPLE CAST BALLOTS IN RECORD NUMBERS

HARTFORD: Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz is praising passage of the Constitutional Amendment giving 17 year-olds in Connecticut the right to vote in primaries as long as they turn 18 by the General Election. Unofficial results show voters approving the measure by a nearly 2-to-1 margin.

“Election Day brought great news for young voters,” said Secretary Bysiewicz. “All across the country, young people stepped up like never before, registering and voting for the first time in the millions. We saw over 130,000 new voters between the ages of 18 and 29 register to vote in Connecticut this year before the General Election. With the passage of this constitutional amendment, thousands of 17 year-olds can now participate in the political process sooner and hopefully become lifelong voters.”

Bysiewicz added, “The passage of this amendment was due to the hard work and perseverance of high school students throughout the state of Connecticut who joined

forces with the Secretary of the State's Office and supporters in the General Assembly like State Representative Jamie Spallone of Essex to make this dream a reality. We owe all of them a sincere debt of gratitude."

Representative Spallone said, "I am pleased not only with passage of this question, but with the wide margin of support it received, especially in light of the other controversial question on the ballot at the same time. This will help encourage lifelong voting habits among young people. This will encourage not only voting, but working on primary campaigns and getting involved in the political process. It shows that with hard work, perseverance and a good idea, we really can amend our constitution to expand voting rights in Connecticut."

The 17 year-old voting Amendment passed by the required $\frac{3}{4}$ majority in the State House of Representatives this year and passed unanimously in the Senate. With its approval by voters yesterday, 17 year-olds will have their first opportunity to cast a ballot in primaries for municipal office on September 15, 2009, provided they will turn 18 by Election Day on November 3, 2009. Those 17 year-olds living in towns with Municipal Elections in May are entitled to cast primary ballots on March 9, 2009 if they will turn 18 by May 4, 2009.

Connecticut now joins nearly 20 other states nationwide who allow 17 year-olds to cast ballots if they will be 18 by Election Day in November. The Amendment will be added as Article XXXI to the State Constitution and take effect within 30 days of passage.